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NBC BRIEFING

29 July 1959

VICE PRESIDENT NIXON IN USSR

- I. Moscow, in Soviet press and over Radio Moscow, is giving substantial coverage to Vice President Nixon's visit to USSR and to US Exhibition.
 - A. Soviet people being given full reporting on Vice President's major activities--tours, visits, receptions--but not on all his statements.
 - B. Soviet press may be devoting more attention than does Radio Moscow in broadcasts to home audiences.
 1. Radio treatment slightly less in volume than that on Macmillan visit and on Kozlov visit to US.
- II. Soviet people, however, while reading and hearing about Vice President's goings and comings are also getting sharp criticism--of the Vice President, of the US exhibition, and of US policy.
 - A. Criticism tempered somewhat by guarded expressions of approval for over-all purpose of exchange visits.
 - B. Personal attacks on Vice President have concerned such episodes as his alleged attempt to give "alms" of 100 rubles to a Soviet worker.
 1. These personal attacks seem to have dropped off after his departure from Moscow.

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2. Broadcasts, however, continue to report so-called "awkward" questions asked Nixon in Moscow and the provinces by Soviet workers.

a. Vice President portrayed as being stymied time and again by sharp political questions of "keen workmen."

b. These "hecklers" obviously planted Party agitators since among other things, in order to refute his statements, they quoted US statistical reports (wages, cost of living, employment) not normally available to Soviet populace.

C. Concerning US policy, Soviet people most frequently reminded of the coincidence of "Captive Nations Week"—in a general tone of amazement and regret that such a "cold war" development should coincide with efforts to improve relations.

(1) Continued presence of US bases abroad is next most frequently mentioned issue.

III. Soviet people being given some, but not all, of Vice President's public statements, which have been treated in such a way as to reduce their possible impact.

A. His speech on arrival in Moscow was broadcast to the Soviet people in full Russian translation on the evening of the same day.

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B. The Soviet people also heard a live broadcast of the ceremonies opening the US exhibition, including the Vice President's speech in English--without any Russian translation.

1. A TASS summary of this speech, broadcast to a number of foreign audiences and presumably published in the bulk of the Soviet press, omitted sections praising the US way of life and implying criticism of certain Soviet policies.

2. This speech and his arrival speech, however, both reportedly published in full by Pravda and Izvestia (combined circulation approximately 10 million) but not, so far as we know, in provincial press.

C. Soviet populace also treated to accounts of public discussion with Khrushchev prior to formal opening of exhibition--but not in full.

1. An account published in Pravda--also broadcast to Soviet audience--devoted 62 sentences to Khrushchev's remarks, only 11 to Nixon. Omitted Vice President's debating points and reported him variously as "in a hurried retreat" or as finding a topic "obviously not after his taste."

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2. In today's issue of Pravda, according to a TASS release, Khrushchev is quoted as stating Tuesday that a tape of this discussion was televised with full Russian translation of Vice President's remarks but that US television omitted translation of some of Khrushchev's "pronouncements of fundamental importance."
3. We cannot yet confirm details on Soviet television.
- D. A TASS account of the jocular conversation between Nixon and Khrushchev at latter's country villa more in accord with Western news accounts, but did omit Vice President's jibes about Khrushchev's efforts to "make propaganda" on Captive Nations issue.
- E. Soviets now giving new twist to Nixon public speeches, with yesterday's Izvestia, among others, frontpaging letters to the editor objecting to Nixon statement that "nobody in the world" knows better than President Eisenhower what war is and objecting to claims of American prosperity.
- IV. Soviets also giving foreign radio audiences the same mixture of considerable coverage and critical interjections.

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V. Publicity given exhibition itself, while extensive, criticizes certain aspects as "not representative," in poor taste, etc.

A. Radio Moscow, for home audience, has also stepped up somewhat volume of its routine remarks on hardships and evils of US way of life. These started last March, possibly as prelude to exhibition and to this summer's influx of official and private visitors.

VI. In short, Soviets obviously trying to minimize the impact the Vice President's visit and the US exhibition might have on Soviet populace, although giving extensive publicity to both.

A. Soviet propagandists may well consider that extensive publicity, blended with criticism, would have far less damaging effect on popular attitudes than would the far-reaching Soviet "grapevine" if little or no publicity given.